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**Sharing the Narratives:  
An Anthropologist among the Local People at the Mausoleum of Fakir Lalon Shah  
in Bangladesh**

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**Summary:**

This paper deals with the relationships between fieldworkers and local people through an analysis of the anti-development movements concerning the mausoleum of Fakir Lalon Shah (c.1774–1890) in Bangladesh in 2000. The mausoleum of Fakir Lalon Shah is located in the town of Kushtia in the western part of Bangladesh. The religious poet Lalon Shah is known as a master of *baul*, a school of wandering minstrels in Bengal, who sing mystical songs called *baul-gan*. Lalon Shah was one of the most famous poets and masters of the *bauls* in 19th century Bengal. The disciples of Lalon Shah inherited his teachings and continue their ritual practices in the vicinity of the mausoleum. The disciples serve not only as the singers of *baul* songs, but also maintain the ascetic practices of *baul*, which are inherited through the master-disciple relations directly from the saint Lalon Shah himself.

This paper focuses on a series of events that occurred at the mausoleum of Lalon Shah when the Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced a mausoleum renovation project with a budget of 36,430,000 taka in 1997. This included the construction of tourist facilities such as 4-story building, museum, and music hall in order to develop the mausoleum as a sightseeing spot. When some intellectuals in Bangladesh organized protests against this governmental project, the author visited the site as a foreign anthropologist for the purpose of collecting the local people's views, and became involved in the opposition movement.

Through an analysis of the anti-development movement and field surveys by the author, this paper reconsiders the possibilities for sharing the narratives with the local people under the postcolonial setting of present-day Bangladesh.

**1. Introduction**

Clifford and Marcus raised questions in their well-known book *Writing Culture* [1986] concerning conventional attempts to describe cultures from a neutral viewpoint. A famous incident cited in the book concerned an ethnic minority residing in the United States who brought a lawsuit concerning the rights of indigenous people in which an anthropologist testified as a witness. In this case ethnographic arguments concerning the characteristics of “native culture” were used to support political and economic interests [Clifford 1988]. Academic views based on ethnological surveys clearly contained political opinions that

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were relevant to the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities. Such questions regarding the relationship between anthropologists and the ethnographic field lead to reflection on the postcolonial positionality of fieldworkers in encounters with the local people.

Particularly, *Orientalism* [1978] by Edward Said posed fundamental questions concerning modern western views about people of 'the Orient', and his critical views regarding the representation of other cultures by western scholars have had a strong influence in various academic fields. *Orientalism* describes the situation in which modern western studies describe peoples of the Orient as different cultures in contrast with the West, making them objects of exoticism or essentialism.<sup>1</sup> It has its roots deep in the colonial structure connecting the Occident and the Orient, and the cultural hegemony of Occident over Orient underlies various issues in different forms, such as problems of ethnic minorities, racial prejudice, gender issues, religious conflicts, and issues of the globalization of culture in the contemporary world. These are all now widely recognised as postcolonial studies according to which, even after the end of colonial rule in Asian and African countries, the people's minds remain rooted in colonial structures which impose a "cultural hegemony" over the forms of representation that are employed in relation to other cultures.

Among them, one of the most famous that discussed the difficulty of representation by local people is "Can the Subaltern Speak?" raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak, a Bengali philosopher, who pointed out that it is difficult for "subalterns" to claim their rights within a situation of political and cultural subordination. For example, Bengali women, who die as "*sati*" by fire during the husbands' funerals, must choose whether to follow the Hindu "tradition" as virtuous wives, or become "native women" who should be rescued in accordance with modern western discourses. By doing so, the women can become "virtuous wives," who are to be honored by the caste society under patriarchal hegemony, or can become "native women," who are to be rescued by the modern discourses under the colonial hegemony, but ultimately they cannot express their own opinion in their terms. By delving into the political and cultural structures of inducing the suppression of subalterns, Spivak aims to release them to others as partners in a dialogue, rather than rescuing them from above.

When this thesis is applied to the relations between anthropologists, who describe local culture through their fieldwork, we can put it differently as: "Can local people speak in the anthropological field?" For example, the description of local people's activities as "eternal

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<sup>1</sup> Said states as follows; Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident"...Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, representing, and having authority over the Orient... The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, or domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony... Cultural hegemony results in the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and culture. The hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more sceptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter. [Said 1978]

culture” is linked to the case in which an anthropologist from a developed country discovers “traditional culture” that has not suffered development. Then, there emerges the question of what is the difference between describing a “traditional culture” in danger of development and intervening in the local society.

This paper deals with the issue over the mausoleum of Fakir Lalon Shah, who has been celebrated as a local folk saint in Bengal since the 19th century, and discusses the relationship between the fieldworker and the local society in a postcolonial context based on the author’s fieldwork in Bangladesh. The author focuses on a series of events that occurred at the mausoleum that enshrines the saint Lalon Shah in the district of Kushtia, Bangladesh. When a civil organization protested against a governmental project to construct tourism facilities to make the pilgrimage place into a sightseeing spot, the author visited the site and took part in the protests. This paper examines the relationships between the various actors concerned with the event, discusses the difficulties encountered in hearing and representing the voices of local people, and the possibilities of sharing their common experiences with others in the anthropological field as dialogue partners rather than as a romanticized people who live with an eternal culture or as a people who should be rescued from their subordination.

## 2. Fakir Lalon Shah

The religious poet Fakir Lalon Shah (c.1774–1890) was a master of *baul*, the culture of a community of wandering minstrels in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Due to the many songs written by Lalon Shah, he is now famous as a religious poet, who is popular among people both in West Bengal, India, and Bangladesh. The mausoleum which enshrined the tomb of Lalon Shah is located in Kushitia in present-day Bangladesh. In its vicinity, *bauls* inherited the precepts of Lalon directly and continue the activities which he initiated. The disciples of Lalon not only serve as singers of the folk songs called *bauls*, but also maintain the tradition of ascetics who practice various religious rituals.

Until Lalon passed away, he wrote poems to make people realise that “religion,” which should liberate the minds of people, actually binds the minds of people, as in Hinduism which leads to discrimination against untouchables and through gender as a result of the caste system. He also argued that Muslim society leads to sectarian frictions such as the Shi’a and the Sunni divide. He preached that the distinction between “religions”, such as Islam and Hinduism, are just differences in the means to reach to the ultimate truth. It can be said that the reason why Lalon’s songs are familiar to people in Bengal is that many people, both the Hindu and Muslim, were moved by his universal insight into religious experiences. Akshay Kumar Maitreya [1895], an intellectual in British India, wrote of him as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding the details of biographical studies and controversies over the Lalon’s birth and life history, please see Togawa [2009].

Lalon's thoughts about religion were very simple and freewheeling. Lalon did not admit the differences in caste and lineage, etc. He got along with Hindus and Muslims without any discrimination. He treated his disciples equally, no matter whether they were Hindus or Muslims or where they were born. His last name "Lalon" is Hindu, while his surname "Shah" is Muslim. Therefore, many people asked Lalon about his birth intriguingly. Lalon did not answer them directly, but read his poems.

*The people want to ascertain to which religion Lalon belongs  
Unfolded yet to be the features of caste to me - says Lalon.*

It is obvious from this quotation that a lot of people were interested in the origins of Lalon and that questions about this were often repeated. In response to such questions, Lalon did not give satisfactory answers, but produced songs expressing the belief that one's birth is of no consequence in the effort to give people an insight into universal truth.

The essay from which the above quote has been taken is one of the earliest of the period in which the intelligentsia began to notice Lalon's uniqueness and historical importance. After Maitreya, many other intellectuals in British India paid attention to Lalon, including Kangal Harinath, Muhammad Mansuruddin, Basant Kumar Pal, Kshithimohan Sen, etc. Particularly, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian Nobel prizewinner, played an important role in introducing the religious philosophy of *Baul* to intellectual society in India and to intellectuals abroad. In 'The Philosophy of Our People' [1926] Tagore depicted the rich tradition of *bauls* in the rural society of Bengal, which he argued inherited the ancient religious philosophy of the Upanishads. He also emphasised the outstanding traditions of Indian civilisation, which include secular ideals comparable to those found in western civilization. While many westerners believed that Indian people were uncivilized and often involved in religious conflicts with each other, Tagore describes the splendid virtues and traditions inherited by the people of Bengal and compares them with western civilization.

In the time of Tagore, Bengal witnessed a growing distrust and confrontation between Hindu and Muslim communities, in part no doubt due to the divide-and-rule policies of the British colonial government. It was an age in which it was necessary and important to promote universal religious experiences and a toleration of differences that went beyond the boundaries of conventional religion. Consequently, intellectuals in nineteenth century Bengal such as Rabindranath Tagore and Akshay Maitreya developed the image of Lalon as a folk poet, to represent an indigenous tradition inherited from the virtues and religious philosophies of ancient civilization, as an antithesis to European civilization and the religious divisions and discord of the time.

### 3. Expulsion from the Mausoleum of Lalon

The contemporary turmoil at the mausoleum of Lalon in Kushtia began in 1984 when a District Commissioner was newly appointed and dispatched to Kushtia. Upon seeing the portrait of Lalon Shah, the Commissioner asked the disciples of Lalon:<sup>3</sup>

“Is he Hindu or Muslim?”

Then, the incident described in Reference 1 occurred.<sup>4</sup>

#### Reference 1 Petition from the Seba Committee of Lalon’s Mausoleum:

To the Prime Minister of Bangladesh:

Petition for the Transfer of Lalon’s Mausoleum from the Lalon Academy to Bauls

....On the occasion of Lalon’s death anniversary in October 1984, the district commissioner of Kushtia ordered the convocation of a Muslim meeting inside the precinct of Lalon’s mausoleum, and made Islamic scholars and police squads stay there. Then, he declared to bauls, the disciples of Lalon,

“The lesson of Islam has been established in Lalon’s mausoleum. From now on, you cannot sing Lalon’s songs. Bauls must participate in this religious meeting.”

At this time, bauls did not follow this request, and so the administrator ordered the police squads to

“Beat bauls with batons, and kick them out of the precinct of Lalon’s tomb.”

Due to this attack, dozens of bauls were injured, and some fainted through agony.

Particularly, the severely injured Birat Shah died several days later.

They were also forcibly deprived of the keys of the mausoleum and cashboxes. The bauls were then excluded from the activities inside Lalon’s mausoleum.

This petition indicates that Lalon’s attitude of surpassing religious distinctions was recognized as a vague, indecisive one and was criticised by politicians in Bangladesh who were promoting Islamic nationalism. The disciples of Lalon did not care whether Lalon’s attitude could be categorised as either Hindu or Muslim according modern religious classifications. However, in post-independence Bangladesh, religiously marginal entities, including Lalon, had to be categorised as “Hindu” or “Muslim” or should alternatively be defined as a new “religion.” Otherwise, the right to carry on religious activities was not

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3 *Ajker Kagaj*. 1999, October, 22; *Pratham Alo*. 1999, November, 5.

4 This petition was submitted by the Seba Committee of Lalon’s Mausoleum to the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 17, 1997. It is a series of petition papers submitted to the government after the incident. The first is in October, 1985 to the President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and in December 1991 to the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in January, 1994 and in August, 1998 to the Minister of Religion.

guaranteed. This was a major dilemma. As a result, the mausoleum of Lalon witnessed a conflict between Lalon's disciples and the administrative committee led by the local government of Kushtia. In order to regain their rights in the mausoleum, the disciples filed a lawsuit against the government, and submitted petitions to the then president and prime minister.

This incident shows the predicament involved when local people are obliged to represent their culture to others, particularly when the representation of their own religious attitude becomes linked to not only the general issue of classification in religion, but also in this case to the interests of particular people related to the mausoleum. This problem came to the foreground once again when the government launched a project for the construction of complex facilities in 1997 in order to convert Lalon's mausoleum into a sightseeing spot.

#### **4. The people's movement against the Lalon mausoleum project**

In 1997, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the Lalon mausoleum project with a budget of about 80 million yen (36,430,000 taka). The project included the construction of adjunct facilities, including a 4-story research building with a library and museum, a music hall, and a guesthouse. However, since the disciples of Lalon Shah had filed a lawsuit to regain their rights, the high court in Dhaka issued a business-suspension order, and the construction was halted. However, the project had a large budget which was beneficial for local agents and politicians and so, despite the high court ruling, the construction work was soon re-commenced unilaterally. This was in August 2000 at a time when the author was staying in Bangladesh. In response to this construction, the movement for preserving the mausoleum of Lalon began. This was described by the following article in Reference 2, published in August 2000.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Reference 2 Enlistment of a committee to protect Lalon's Mausoleum:**

Twenty-one intellectuals in Bangladesh enlisted a committee to preserve the tranquil environment of Lalon's mausoleum. According to this, the plan of constructing a building and a hall inside the precinct of the mausoleum was produced 3 years ago. Lalon's disciples, bauls and followers, filed a lawsuit against this plan, and then the court ordered the suspension of the construction. However, this order of suspension is now ignored under various kinds of pressures and intentions. The precinct is now under construction, following the original plan.

The authors of the statement mentioned, in perplexity, that if a 4-story building is completed, the sacred tomb will be superimposed by this building, and the beautiful

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5 *Janakantha*, 29th August, 2000.

landscape will be degraded. The solemn, sacred atmosphere of Lalon's mausoleum will be ruined, and this place will become messy and grubby. This is not desirable from any aspect.

As mentioned in this article, when the construction work was commenced, intellectuals and journalists in the capital Dhaka raised an outcry. The protest by the intellectuals was called "the committee for protecting Lalon's mausoleum." In October, protest meetings and demonstrations were held in plazas and avenues in Dhaka. Newspapers covered the story. The front page featured Shamshuru Rahman, the elder of letters, holding a placard. Consequently, the turmoil regarding the mausoleum in Kushitia attracted the attention of a lot of people, particularly as it involved not only local people but also a confrontation between the promotion of tourism development by the government and the journalists of Bangladesh. In response to this protest, the counsellor of the Ministry of Culture, which hosted the project, announced the suspension of the construction, in respect of the court order. But despite this announcement, local construction work in Kushitia continued. On the 23rd of the following month, November, the Minister of Culture pledged to stop all kinds of construction work. However, construction was again continued at the initiative of various local magnates. In this situation, the confrontation between the proponents and opponents of the construction began to be featured in newspapers every day. The BBC World Service, which is significantly influential in South Asia, also began broadcasting news about the conflict. In addition, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her concerns about this situation to accompanying journalists, when she was visiting Washington. In November, the Lalon complex plan assumed the form therefore of a nationwide dispute.

### **5. Article calling for the cessation of the construction at Lalon's mausoleum**

When the author revisited Bangladesh in November 2000, the situation in Kushitia was the same. The press club in Kushitia transmitted the news of the cessation of the construction to newspaper publishers in Dhaka. Then, the author called an acquaintance residing in the vicinity of the mausoleum from Dhaka, and found that the construction was still continuing. According to this acquaintance, the bogus news story was transmitted, at the instigation of powerful local people. In practice the construction work was being carried on ceaselessly, ignoring the concerns of the surrounding people. At the mausoleum, a lot of labourers were employed, and a 24-hour day-and-night shift system was adopted. After returning to Dhaka, the author discussed this situation with "the committee for protecting the mausoleum," and there emerged a proposal that the author should write an article in his capacity as a Japanese academic scholar. In the article I was depicted holding the scoop photos of the construction site that I had just taken. The following is a translation of the article as it was inserted into a



national newspaper written in Bengali.<sup>6</sup>

### **Reference 3 Let us restore the old landscape of the mausoleum of Lalon**

Mr. Masahiko Togawa, a Japanese researcher and a disciple of the religious poet Lalon, visits the mausoleum frequently in Kushitia, Bangladesh. Mr. Togawa feels deeply distressed by the ongoing construction project at Lalon's mausoleum. This project was criticized broadly by citizens in Bangladesh, and recently, the Minister of Culture ordered the suspension of this construction project. However, Mr. Togawa visited the mausoleum on the 26th of this month, and informed us that the order of the minister is being totally ignored. Then, he submitted the following article to us:

I have visited Bangladesh many times in order to research *bauls*, who are minstrels in Bengal, as a Japanese cultural anthropologist. Every time I visit Bangladesh, I listen to Lalon's songs, visit the mausoleum, and am astonished by its beauty. I deeply respect and venerate Lalon. I have learned a lot of things from Lalon's precepts. In order to further understand his religious thought, I even became a disciple of the followers of Lalon. I was obsessed with the charm of Lalon's poems. I wrote a lot of papers in Japan.

Lalon's poems, songs, and profound religious philosophy influence everyone who knows of him. Many Japanese people consider that Bangladesh is a poor country that often suffers from flood and famine and has no choice but to rely on the assistance of other countries for constructing bridges and roads. However, all of my friends were impressed with the poems of Lalon. Then, they came to deeply respect the enriched culture of Bangladesh.

On August 21, I visited the renowned mausoleum of Lalon. I felt deeply distressed about the situation at this mausoleum. The mausoleum of the preacher of *bauls'* songs was being treated poorly. The walls surrounding the mausoleum were left untouched after collapse. A lot of trucks passed by the mausoleum, producing a loud noise. Around the mausoleum, adjunct facilities were under construction. Neighbouring *bauls* were just standing and staring at this tragic scene of construction. After returning from Kushitia to Dhaka, I talked with many friends about this event, in agony.

This month, I revisited Bangladesh. Then, on November 26, I visited the mausoleum in Kushitia again, only to see an unbelievable scene. Regardless of the minister's order for the cessation of construction, the construction work at the mausoleum was

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6 Pratham Alo, 30th November, 2000.

being continued.

The officials of the plan explained as follows: It is necessary to construct facilities here, for the convenience of Lalon researchers and foreign tourists. I venerate Lalon, and am a disciple of *bauls*, and I have visited this mausoleum many times. However, I have never thought of staying in a sumptuous concrete building. I stay in the house of a *baul*, who is my mentor, in the vicinity of the mausoleum. I sit on the veranda of the soil-wall house, and take the ordinary meal of the village. Then, we listen to the beautiful Lalon's songs sung by the little daughter of my mentor. Along with her singing voice, I play the one-stringed harp. I enjoy the beautiful song in a soil-wall house, from the bottom of my heart. Such pleasure cannot be achieved in sumptuous concrete facilities. I hope that the mausoleum will regain the simple, peaceful state of old days. I wish to listen to *baul* songs there again.

The construction at the mausoleum was stopped, two days after the release of this article. Then, the campaign for protecting Lalon's mausoleum in Bangladesh entered a new phase. However, since I was involved in this campaign and played some part in it by means of this published statement, I have felt badly ever since. For example, it is strange to say that a Japanese anthropologist has "discovered" a great culture at Lalon's mausoleum. It sounds like "orientalism," suggesting that a tourist from a developed country with an ailing civilization is somehow healed by the mysteries of South Asian rural culture. In addition, the attitude of protecting the "naive culture" as it has been, against the destruction arising from modern, urban-centric concepts of development, leaves the uncomfortable feeling that this might be "essentialism" - regarding the indigenous culture as an eternal essence that should remain untouched by historical change.

Japan is the largest aid-donor to Bangladesh, and when visiting anthropologists from that country make statements about local political and cultural issues, it reminds us of an analogy from colonial history featuring the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Some may well doubt how this Japanese person can acclaim the comfort and beauty of a soil-wall house in Bangladesh whilst most of the time he lives in a modern concrete building in Japan. There is the question of whether the published article merely "describes" issues within a culture from the viewpoint of an anthropologist, or "claims" the rights of local people on their behalf.

## **6. The local people and the fieldworker**

Imagining local people's activities as representing an "eternal culture" is uncomfortably similar to the example of an anthropologist from an urbanised, developed country discovering "traditional culture" in another that has simply not experienced development. Isn't raising

one's voice in support of a movement protecting a traditional mausoleum against a government project for tourism development simply an intervention in local politics? Yet if we recognize the political event occurring in Lalon's mausoleum as a mere development issue, without considering the various religious implications involved, we will fail to capture the essence of the disciples' appeals to the court. These are all important questions for the anthropologist. However the rapid progress of events in Bangladesh prevented such questions from being discussed. The suspended construction of facilities at the mausoleum was resumed in February of the following year, and the main buildings were completed around the end of the general elections in October 2001. In this light, our efforts — for better or worse — turned out to be fruitless.

The suspension of construction was later used as a political tool by a broad range of influential local people during preparations for the general elections. Although it was forecast that the ruling party Awami League would win an overwhelming victory, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) won in all of the four constituencies of Kushitia, and a change of the governing party was seen throughout the country. As a result, the project of developing sightseeing facilities for the benefit of visiting tourists (and local magnates) was considered a corrupt initiative of the former regime, and the completed buildings were left untouched. As argued by Clifford, if the activities of anthropologists who "represent" the voice of local people are regarded critically as having political implications, the event mentioned above verifies ironically the powerlessness of anthropologists compared with the overwhelming demands of local people within the real world of politics.

The article by the author which appeared in a national newspaper was aimed at "representing" the voice of local people — "The development at the mausoleum should be stopped" — in an understandable manner, by proposing that the "original culture" of the *bauls* should be conserved from the development agenda of urbanised elites. The *bauls* of the mausoleum, whose appeals had been suppressed, had no choice but to claim the authenticity of culture to protect their religious rights, in order to cope with the strong demand for development by the government, and the author both supported and gave voice to these demands.

The powerlessness of those who aimed to protect the mausoleum can be seen in the fact that the protest by local people was interpreted as an appeal for the preservation of "original culture". Their real argument for restoring religious rights at the mausoleum could not be expressed in understandable words. This can be said to be the limit of our "interpretation of culture."

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the positionality of the *bauls* would not change no matter whether the development project at the mausoleum was promoted or rejected. It is the very dilemma which Gayatri Spivak discusses in her article "*Can the*

*Subaltern Speak*". In other words, it raises the question of how we can represent the opinions of subalterns, who are suffering from such a dilemma, without claiming their opinion in the manner that Spivak describes.

In March 2000, the crew of a Japanese broadcasting cooperation produced a documentary regarding "*bauls*" at Lalon's mausoleum, as a program to introduce the culture of Bangladesh. They asked the author to provide information as a "specialist" on Bangladesh, and so the author was able to witness the detailed processes of filming by the crew.

Several days after that TV crew arrived in Kushitia, while the author was taking part in an important ritual at Lalon's mausoleum, the crew burst into the ritual room, holding television cameras, and asked the author to leave while they filmed the scene of the ritual.

The author had visited the room several times during the preceding three days to participate in this ritual, and sit beside his mentor as an actual member. Everyone in the mausoleum knew that the author was participating in the ritual to introduce disciples, and the crew who barged into the room were mere "Japanese people" not related to the local people. While the master who hosted the ritual had ordered participants not to leave their seats after the start of the ritual, the leader of the crew forced the author to leave the ritual, as they considered that the Japanese author should not be filmed as a participant.

As a result, the TV crew silenced the author's voice. Under such circumstances, if the author cooperates in the filming at the site and gives opinions as an expert on local culture, this would mean that the author supports the Orientalist views, in which the image of the local people is romanticized by the media. If the author opposes the insensitive treatment of the TV crew, he will be recognized as a "Japanese person" who can even criticize the authority of media from abroad.

It would lead to a really contradictory positionality for the author, in which he behaves as a member of the mausoleum while behaving like the representative of the mausoleum in front of "Japanese visitors".

## 7. Concluding remarks

In this study, the author has attempted to discuss the relationship with people the author encountered at a site in Bangladesh as dialogue partners rather than as romanticised people, embodying an eternal culture, who should be rescued from the perils of urban-centred development within an underdeveloped society. However, the author himself ended up being recognised as an influential figure who helped the local people to stop the development. This experience in Bangladesh underlines an important difficulty encountered within fieldwork in the contemporary discipline of anthropology; namely, the difficulties that lie in describing situations in terms of a simple relationship between the developed country and the third world, the city and the rural, and the dichotomy between "others" and the "self." Just as the *bauls* in

the mausoleum have difficulty in expressing their own opinions within the local society, so too do anthropologists face difficulty in describing other cultures within their own.

The campaign by the *bauls*, who claim a freewheeling religious philosophy, was recognized as a political act that might sway the development authority involved in construction work at the mausoleum. This corresponds to the situation in which the activities of anthropologists who attempt to describe culture as it is, are considered as political interventions that might influence development.

This experience in Bangladesh suggests that the dilemmas of representation experienced by local people may interestingly be closely linked to their representation by fieldworkers elsewhere in the world. In this sense, the discussion concerning the relationship between local people and field workers may provide a common view, in which we share the same difficulty in representing others.

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